

VZCZCXRO1473
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #0228 0761025
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 171025Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1995
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3001
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1297
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3338
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2724
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L BISHKEK 000228

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION HOLDS RALLY IN MEMORY OF AKSY VICTIMS

Classified By: DCM Lee Litzenberger for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Leaders of Kyrgyz opposition parties and non-governmental organizations gathered in front of the Kyrgyz White House on March 17 to hold a peaceful rally in memory of victims of the 2002 Aksy events. More than a dozen police officers observed the rally, which lasted approximately one hour. Although the White House is not an "authorized" location for public gatherings, the sensitivities surrounding the Aksy events apparently provided sufficient political cover, and the protest went forward without incident. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On March 17, leaders of several Kyrgyz opposition parties and NGOs organized a protest in front of the Kyrgyz White House in memory of the victims of the 2002 Aksy events. The protesters demanded that government officials connected to the tragedy be brought to justice. Opposition leaders, including Temir Sariyev (Ak Shumkar party) and Topchubek Turgunaliyev (Erkindik party), ex-Minister of Defense Ismail Isakov, Social Democrat MP Roza Otunbayeva, and several NGO leaders were among the demonstrators. Approximately fifty participants, flanked by fifteen Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) officers and surrounded by local journalists, displayed placards with the names of the six victims of the Aksy events while calling for the government to hold officials accountable for their involvement.

13. (SBU) The "Aksy events" of 2002 remain a particularly sensitive subject in Kyrgyzstan. Seven years ago, in the Aksy district of the Jalalabad Oblast, supporters of then-Member of Parliament Azimbek Beknazarov took to the streets to protest his arrest on charges of abuse of power. Protesters believed Beknazarov's detention was politically motivated, after he had spoken out against the government handover of land to China. On March 17, 2002, MVD officers opened fire on the crowd of protesters, killing six and injuring dozens more. Over the years, protesters have complained that high-level officials have not been held accountable for the tragedy. Although several officials, including the former governor and a prosecutor, were convicted in connection with the events, all sentences were subsequently suspended without a single suspect serving time in prison.

14. (C) Comment: Dubbed one of the "saddest pages in the recent history of Kyrgyzstan" by President Bakiyev, the 2002 Aksy events continue to be a sensitive subject in the minds of most citizens. While opposition and NGO leaders likely would have been swept away by MVD officers for holding a rally in an unauthorized location, these sensitivities proved enough protection to allow the protest today at the front gates of the White House to go forward without incident.
GFOELLER